

JOHN BRYAN WARD-PERKINS, CMG, CBE, FBA

1912–1981

John Ward-Perkins, who died on 28 May 1981, was Director of the School from 1946 to 1974, guiding it from an inevitably muted period (the complete closure during the war had been preceded by years in which the political climate was unfavourable to foreign excavation in Italy) to vigorous activity and high prestige.

He came to the post young, but already matured by the experience of his war service and highly qualified by academic achievement; while the remarkable spread of his interests fitted him particularly well for an institution which caters for such a variety of disciplines and activities. His talent for archaeology had been aroused when he was a boy at Winchester, maintained at Oxford and developed further in the stimulating atmosphere of the London Museum under the direction of R. E. M. (Sir Mortimer) Wheeler. He made his mark quickly, and over a wide range of subject matter, notably by his catalogue of the London Museum's medieval collection and by excavations at the Lockley's Roman villa site near Welwyn Garden City and at Oldbury Hill Fort at Ightham in Kent. In 1939 he was appointed to be Professor of Archaeology at the Royal University of Malta, but within a few months returned home to volunteer as a soldier under the command of his former museum director.

The war years in a sense interrupted his career, but were far from sterile archaeologically—they certainly helped to train his eye for the lie of the land (and one of his great strengths lay in his appreciation of the importance of geography, his ability to relate a site and its physical setting)—and they took him to North Africa for his first sight of an area in which he was to develop one of his major archaeological programmes. He would later describe with humour the frustrations of seeing an interesting monument from a military vehicle; but he tabled its location for the future and proceeded with the task in hand. He took opportunities as they came, however, for closer inspection—looking seriously at early churches while on short leave in Egypt and, when seconded from his regiment to organize care of antiquities under the Military Government in Libya (an initiative of Wheeler's), seizing quickly on a number of points whose further study could throw important light not only on local history but on that of the whole Roman world. After rejoining his regiment for the Italian campaign and becoming its commander he was again seconded for the care of antiquities, to be head of the Monuments and Fine Arts Sub-Commission in Italy. At the time of his appointment to be Director of the School he was already, therefore, well-established in the Italian field, very knowledgeable about Italian monuments of all periods and in good relationships with Italian scholars as with other foreigners working in Italy. It is a small fragment of archaeological history that in 1946 he joined with the Italian Professor Enrico Josi and the Swedish Professor Eric Sjoquist in what he described as a 'modest piece of work' in the church of S. Salvatore at Spoleto—the first excavation on Italian soil for many years in which foreigners had been involved, and an earnest of future international collaboration.

His career as director was too full for any but a summary account here; and inevitably what is offered below has been affected by the writer's personal knowledge

which highlights some aspects at the expense of others. Moreover, he was very active in stimulating, assisting, and actually getting under way projects which were carried out by others, and this very important aspect of his life is very easily forgotten or underestimated. It is, in any case, too soon to make a full assessment of him. It may be said, however, that his vigorous mind and ability to reach a swift and valid diagnosis of a situation made him a natural leader in the international archaeological community constituted by the foreign schools in Rome and, in due course, well beyond this. He helped to found the International Association of Classical Archaeology, to restore to Rome the great German academic libraries, to found and maintain the periodical *Fasti Archaeologici*, to revive the systematic publication of sculpture in the Roman Empire (*Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*), to initiate a scheme for the systematic mapping of the Roman Empire (*Tabula Imperii Romani*), to establish the systematic study of marbles in the Roman world. Much later his many activities included an energetic part in negotiations which led to the revival of the running record of publication of Greek inscriptions (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*). This kind of work continued almost unabated (it seemed) after his retirement, when, it may be added, he became President of FIAC, President of the Eleventh International Congress of Classical Archaeology (held in London), heavily responsible for the Pompeii Exhibition in London (and joint author, with Amanda Claridge, of its valuable catalogue), and, reviving an earlier interest, President of the Society for Libyan Studies.

But the central activity of his working life was a series of archaeological programmes for which the School provided an admirable base and in which it acquired a new status. Very early John secured for the School the collection of air photographs taken by the RAF over Italy and neighbouring territories—a mine of archaeological information. At this stage, however, he was mainly concerned to follow up his diagnosis of needs in Libya. He established co-operation with the Italian scholars who had worked or were working in the area and with the staffs of the local department of antiquities, secured collaboration with R. G. Goodchild and, in the early years, with the military authorities, and was able to take advantage also of a situation in which archaeological enterprise was welcome as providing employment in a slack season after the harvest (the discovery of Libyan oil, of course, changed all that long ago). His expeditions were designed in the first place to fill major gaps in the history of Tripolitania, to provide a dated pottery sequence, systematic architectural surveys of the coastal cities and systematic recording in the neglected hinterland of the cities.

At the same time he focused detailed effort on certain buildings and sculptures, chiefly at Lepcis Magna, which seemed to him to throw light on the architectural and artistic history of the Roman Empire as a whole; and in the course of doing so was struck by the evidence available at Lepcis on trade in marble, a subject which became one of his major personal interests. He drew in senior scholars to work independently or in collaboration with him (Kathleen Kenyon, Jocelyn Toynbee), younger ones (Richard Goodchild) and students from the School and elsewhere, to whom he generously provided opportunities and credit. The whole project, completed in the field, although not quite on paper (in his last years he was anxiously seeking to bring to publication the results of Kathleen Kenyon's work at Sabratha and the remains of his own at Lepcis), revolutionized the story of Tripolitanian monuments and added

enormously to the material available, especially in the hinterland, the area of the Roman *limes*. Later he moved to Cyrenaica at Goodchild's invitation, primarily with a view to producing a Cyrenaican survey of Christian monuments to parallel that which they had jointly produced for Tripolitania. This work was interrupted, partly by his own involvement elsewhere, partly by Goodchild's premature death, partly by local problems which required the diversion of all British resources available to a rescue excavation at Sidi Krebish in Benghazi. Quite recently he had resumed activity designed to lead to publication of Goodchild's unpublished work; but had not had time for more than a beginning.

The main thrust of the Libyan programme, begun in the forties, lasted about a decade. Meanwhile Italy began to recover from the war, movement within the country became easier and conditions more favourable for extended work there; and John developed his second major programme, the South Etruscan survey. This enterprising conception recalled the School's earlier great contribution to the study of the Roman Campagna made by Thomas Ashby, used the new tool available in the air photographs mentioned above and met an increasingly urgent need as new building and changed land use threatened and indeed destroyed the archaeology of the area. Starting with a collaborative work with Martin Frederiksen, he made of it a programme which could and did offer even greater opportunities to the School's students than the Libyan one. Not only classical archaeologists and architects could be involved, but medievalists (whether archaeologists or archivists) and historians of later periods too; and there was also from time to time work which interested some artists. As the threats extended it became imperative to find more helpers to cover the ground quicker and, as in Libya, scholars of all ages from elsewhere, together, now, with amateurs from among the British residents in Rome, were attracted to the tasks; and, incidentally, John showed a great capacity for spotting unknown talent and arousing enthusiasm which he then directed into useful activity. When, in due course, it became possible to supplement surface surveys by excavation, a notable feature was the fruitful collaboration of young Italian with British archaeologists that he organized, for instance at Quattro Fontanili. The result of the programme was certainly to save from oblivion as well as obliteration numbers of monuments which combine to make up a revolutionary picture of the archaeology and history of the area—evidence whose potential is not, perhaps, fully exhausted as yet, although much has been made of it already. It was also to reveal how important a contribution surface survey can make when carried out systematically.

The two programmes did not preclude other archaeological enterprises and I note here particularly, as contributing to his own major interests, his work in Istanbul on the palace of the Byzantine emperors, his unceasing collection of material for the history of Roman architecture, and his equally unceasing collection of evidence on the marble trade in the Roman world.

Only a man who was a very good administrator and organizer could have done so much. The School, very silent in 1946, was soon, as a result of all this, a lively centre of creative scholarship, and it became even more obviously so when the camerone above the dining hall was developed as an archaeological 'workshop' under the care first of Anne Kahane, later of Molly Cotton. That of course was additional to the independent creativity of its scholars and artists as individuals

(which, it may be argued, was apt to acquire added momentum by spontaneous imitation). The School's community is not, I think, an easy one to direct, with its constantly changing complement of men and women of strong character and differing aims and ambitions. John, himself a man of strong character and very clear cut ambition for his work, found his patience sometimes stretched too far by what he felt to be our follies. But he was at the same time understanding of real difficulties, and generous with help, opportunities, credit and encouragement, willing to take much trouble to further a young student's career. Many of us in fact owe our careers as they have developed to his advice or intervention.

He was also so very talented in so many ways as well as in scholarship—from the great (I think of his sensitive appreciation of painting and sculpture, his photography, his love and knowledge of natural phenomena, of birds, flowers, country side, his love for music) to the small (that exquisitely kept stamp collection illustrates the trouble he would take to achieve perfection in every detail); but I remember here also a demonstration of how to put papers into an envelope without damage even when the fit is tight and, just a few months before his death, of the exactly right way to extract a weed from a lawn. All this gave him points of contact with many to whom the drive and vigour which characterized him in his archaeological programmes might seem over-dominating—at least one student who had clashed with him was won over by the sound of his playing at the piano to realize that he must not be judged too quickly, and that one could often, with Bruno Bonelli, say of his moments of crossness 'scherza'.

He was, of course, ably seconded by a series of librarians and assistant directors, while a very important feature of this time was the devotion to the institution, to its students and its visitors, that he developed in the locally recruited staff (especially Bruno Bonelli, Fanny Bonainto, Anna Fazzari, Luciana Valentini). They have helped to make the School a place that provides well for its students and is attractive to academic visitors. And it seems to me, looking back, that it was of particular importance that, alongside the archaeological activities, there was a family at the centre of the School, Margaret his wife and the four children with him, a family lively and as various in interests as himself, warm and welcoming. It would of course be impossible to overestimate the contribution made by Margaret to every aspect of his career, but especially to the life of the School, in which her happy personality and ease of communication with others were invaluable assets. The presence of a family life in itself is some insurance against ivory towers; and it also facilitated pleasantly informal entertaining of Italian and other academics, and a wide variety of interesting but non-academic people who sang carols with us at Christmas, ate and talked with us on other occasions, and enlarged our experience and our opportunities.

The achievements of John's career received acclaim and recognition in the honours first of the CBE and then (at his retirement) of the CMG, academically by his Fellowship of the British Academy, honorary degrees at Birmingham and Alberta, membership of a number of academies, invitations to lecture, particularly in America, Canada and Australia, the British Academy's Sernea Medal for services to Italian studies, the Medaglio d'Oro per i Benemeriti della Cultura at Rome.

At the end he was worrying about what he had not completed. As one surveys his career it seems quite remarkable that one man should have done so much; and it is

important to underline, as I have already said, that in addition he helped or stimulated so much more work by others. The School has good reason to remember his Directorship with pride and his students with gratitude.

J. R.

L'Italia ancora sconvolta dalle ultime fiammate e dalle tragiche conseguenze della guerra già si apriva ad una volontà di fervida partecipazione alle iniziative internazionali nel campo della cultura. Tra queste si segnalano in particolare le attività degli studiosi di antichità che tornavano a convergere a Roma come ad una *méta* naturale dei loro itinerari spirituali e delle loro esperienze. Ricordiamo con una certa nostalgia quegli anni di entusiasmo per una rinnovata collaborazione fra archeologi italiani e stranieri, per la nascita di feconde amicizie, per la fede in comuni ideali di ricerca. I tradizionali pellegrinaggi ai monumenti romani ripresero impulso; vecchie istituzioni si rivivificarono; sorsero nuovi terreni d'incontro con la creazione dell'Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica e dell'Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia, Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma.

Le imprese nate da questo spirito di fratellanza — delle quali oggi, a distanza di alcuni decenni, cogliamo frutti sempre più maturi — non sarebbero state realizzabili senza l'impegno di alcuni uomini illuminati che possiamo considerare i fondatori di una comunità accademica, quale è quella romana, che non ha confronti altrove ed in altri tempi (se non forse nella stessa Roma del secolo XIX). Come testimone e partecipe degli stimolanti eventi culturali dell'immediato dopoguerra io non posso dimenticare l'immagine del giovane ufficiale inglese che, reduce da un'avventura africana dalla quale il suo carattere e i suoi interessi scientifici avrebbero ricevuto un'impronta indelebile, fu preposto alla Sotto-commissione del Governo Alleato per i Monumenti e le Belle Arti ed in questa funzione cooperò in modo decisivo al salvataggio del patrimonio artistico italiano; quindi fu nominato Direttore della Scuola Britannica di Roma. John B. Ward-Perkins si trovò allora appunto ad essere tra quei primi animatori della nuova vita archeologica romana, a fianco dello svedese Sjöqvist, dell'olandese Leopold, dei francesi Grenier e Bruhl, degli americani Van Buren e Brown, dell'italo-svizzero Pfister, dell'italiano Romanelli oltre l'autore di questa nota, e di altri: alcuni dei quali scomparsi lasciando un dolce e triste ricordo di amicizia ed una preziosa eredità di lavoro. Ma Ward-Perkins, se fece parte del gruppo dei pionieri, ne ha continuato poi anche la tradizione fino agli anni più recenti quale convinto assertore della cooperazione archeologica internazionale: a lui si debbono tra l'altro, nella sua qualità di Presidente dell'Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica, l'organizzazione e il successo dell'ultimo grande Congresso archeologico tenuto a Londra nel 1978.

Fu studioso e promotore di studi infaticabile. Ne ricordiamo la maturazione di esperienza e di produttività attraverso il lungo arco di tempo che lo ha visto rappresentare la scienza e la cultura britannica a Valle Giulia: sempre tuttavia, giovane e non più giovane, con la stessa impronta di volontà ostinata, di scrupolosa diligenza filologica, di concreto pragmatismo non scevro di una sottile vena di ironia per le impostazioni eccessivamente teoriche dei problemi. Queste sfumature di carattere incidenti sul suo metodo di ricerca e di azione gli erano forse in parte derivate dall'antica familiarità con quel maestro dell'indagine archeologica che fu Sir

Mortimer Wheeler, del quale ebbi personalmente la fortuna di cogliere, in un sia pur brevissimo incontro, oltrechè la dottrina e la saggezza, il senso dell'humour e la serena umanità. Di John Ward-Perkins ho potuto invece seguire ed ammirare per tanti anni l'attività scientifica ed organizzativa, vederlo circondato da cumuli di libri sparsi in terra nel suo studio, sentirlo discutere con acutezza e diplomazia ai tavoli delle conferenze, conoscere le sue imprese di ricognizione e di scavo. Brusco, a volte chiuso, dimostrò però sempre con i fatti più che con le parole la sua affezione per la Scuola che fiorì sotto la sua guida, per i giovani, per gli amici e soprattutto per la famiglia. Vinse con la forza d'animo i molti e gravi, antichi e recenti impedimenti di una salute malferma. Fino all'ultimo, anche dopo il suo ritiro dalla direzione della Scuola romana, continuò ad impegnarsi in onerosi viaggi di studio e di conferenze in Europa, in America, in Australia.

A questo archeologo militante — e non immemore di una certa militare educazione alla disciplina — furono congeniali, dopo la sue prime esperienze di studio delle antichità patrie, specialmente l'Africa e l'Italia. La Libia é stato il campo di sue lunghe appassionate ricerche, come proseguimento e sviluppo delle attività archeologiche italiane (delle quali egli ebbe sempre grande considerazione e rispetto), a Sabratha, a Leptis Magna e nell'interno della Tripolitania. In Italia si segnalano, tra molti altri suoi progetti, alcune imprese di più alto rendimento: il salvataggio e la valorizzazione ai fini archeologici dell'incomparabile patrimonio di fotografie aeree riprese dalla RAF durante la guerra; la ricognizione e lo studio topografico dei territori veiente e falisco a nord di Roma; l'esplorazione della necropoli villanoviana dei Quattro Fontanili a Veio; gli scavi di Gravina in Puglia. Proprio come studioso di antichità etrusche e italiche io sento il dovere di sottolineare l'importanza di queste iniziative e dei loro risultati. L'indagine sulla topografia di Veio pubblicata nei *Papers of the British School at Rome* del 1961 ha aperto tutto un nuovo orizzonte di prospettive e di discussioni sulla formazione delle città etrusche. L'accuratissimo scavo delle tombe protostoriche dei Quattro Fontanili, condotto in collaborazione con l'Università di Roma e con la Soprintendenza dell'Etruria Meridionale, e soprattutto le esemplari relazioni pubblicate nelle *Notizie degli Scavi* costituiscono attualmente la più sicura documentazione che noi possediamo sulla civiltà villanoviana, che é quanto dire sulla fase iniziale della civiltà etrusca.

Come altri archeologi del nostro tempo, Ward-Perkins sembrò essere attratto, più che dall'arte classica, dai problemi delle origini — non dimentico un suo acutissimo saggio sulle origini etrusche che lanciò quella che io ho definito la «teoria normanna» delle supposte navigazioni tirreniche dall'Oriente in Italia — e dai problemi della fine del mondo antico, nonché dalle ricerche tecnologiche specialmente sui marmi. Alla tarda antichità e al medioevo si riportano, oltre a singoli contributi come quello sul Leone di San Marco a Venezia, il programma e l'avvio di un'indagine sugli insediamenti dell'Alto Medioevo nell'Italia Centrale, troppo a lungo trascurati: ciò che é stato un non irrilevante incentivo alla attuale affermazione dell'archeologia medioevale in Italia.

Con gli amici britannici anche noi italiani piangiamo la immatura scomparsa di John Ward-Perkins, augurandoci che i fecondi indirizzi del suo lavoro possano trovare una degna continuazione per il progresso dei nostri studi.

M. P.